June 2001

WisDOT Green Bay Transportation District

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), along with Graef, Anhalt, Schloemer and Associates (G.A.S.), is in the process of completing an environmental assessment for the construction of a new bridge to replace the aging Claude Allouez Bridge.

As part of that process, WisDOT and G.A.S. have hosted presentations for area residents, local business owners, schools, churches and local government. During these presentations, a number of questions were asked about the project. The following is a list of commonly asked questions and their answers.

In this issue:

History

Claude Allouez Bridge was built in 1932.

The lift span received a new deck in 1965.

The lift span was again repaired in 1986.

The rest of the structure received an asphalt overlay in 1974.

A new concrete deck was put on in 1977.

Since 1977, the deck has been repaired 27 times in various locations.

The decision making process

Q. Who makes the final decision on where the new bridge will be placed?
A. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is responsible for making the final decision on the new bridge location.

Q. How will that decision be made?
A. The decision will be made after the environmental assessment and document have been approved; made available to the public and the environmental reviewing agencies; and after a public hearing is held. The decision will also consider input from the City of De Pere, Brown County, environmental agencies and the general public.

The environmental process

Q. What is an Environmental Process?
A. From the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1969:

> "The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332, as amended) directs all federal agencies to use a systematic, interdisciplinary approach during planning and decision making whenever proposed actions would have a potential impact on the human environment.
>
> Further, such agencies must include detailed documentation of the possible environmental impacts of a proposed action, any unavoidable adverse

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environmental effects, alternatives to the proposed action, local short-term uses of the environment, enhancement of long-term productivity and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources."

Q. What will the Environmental Process help determine?
A. The environmental process identifies the impacts of the proposed action which, in turn, helps WisDOT make well-informed decisions. The process also ensures that full consideration is given to a project's impacts on the human environment.

Q. Do each of the identified bridge locations take into account the impact on downtown De Pere?
A. Yes. For the most part, each of the four alternatives under consideration will be evaluated as equal alternatives. However, it is typical in the environmental documentation process to focus more effort on the alternative(s), which is identified as preferred for one reason or another. Overall, the environmental analysis of the project area (downtown De Pere) includes, but is not limited to, the following areas of evaluation:

- General economics (i.e. impact on the area's economy)
- Community and residential impacts (i.e. impact on neighborhoods, residents, traffic, pedestrians, land use, etc.)
- Commercial and industrial impacts (i.e. impacts on businesses, parking, traffic, etc.)
- Natural environmental factors (i.e. wetlands, fish, river, etc.)
- Air quality
- Construction noise
- Traffic noise
- Historical and archaeological resources
- Aesthetics
- Contaminated materials
- Storm water quality and erosion control
- Environmental justice (i.e. impacts on disadvantaged communities, etc.)
- Impacts on recreational resources

Traffic

Q. Will a new, multi-lane bridge increase traffic in downtown De Pere?
A. The number of lanes is not being increased to encourage more traffic into the downtown area.

The new bridge and approaches are being designed to minimize existing congestion and handle future projected traffic needs. The number of lanes will be dependent on providing a minimum level of service (i.e. some congestion at peak traffic hours).

While the bridge and approaches are being built with some traffic increase in mind, the majority of the projected traffic increase is expected to be handled by the bridge proposed to be built south of the City of De Pere.

Q. Will there be more traffic noise with the new bridge?
A. The volume of noise generated by vehicular traffic is essentially dependent upon three factors: the type and number of vehicles and the speed at which they are traveling. The construction of the new bridge, in itself, will not result in a significant change in traffic noise.

Q. How is the noise impact determined?
A. The potential impact of noise on a community is measured by evaluating the noise level, the time at which the noise occurs and the duration of the peak noise levels.

In most communities, the peak traffic volumes occur in the early morning and early evening when the majority of commuters are

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moving to and from work. Little can be done to alter the timing of this peak traffic movement, but reducing the duration of the peak traffic volumes can reduce the impacts of increased noise levels.

The redesign of the bridge and associated approaches will greatly improve traffic flow through the area. One of the advantages of this is a reduction in the duration of peak traffic flow and an overall reduction in the duration of peak traffic flow noise.

Q. Will the new bridge encourage drivers to speed?
A. It is anticipated the new bridge will have the same speed limit as the existing bridge, which is 25 mph. Appropriate speed enforcement should keep the speeds at the posted limits.

Q. Can the current intersections accommodate the traffic of a four-lane bridge?
A. No. The existing intersections are unable to satisfactorily serve the existing traffic volumes, much less the anticipated future volumes. The proposed intersections are being designed to accommodate the projected traffic in downtown De Pere and should help to minimize traffic congestion.

Q. Will the new bridge create traffic flow problems on the east and west side?
A. Currently, drivers experience traffic flow problems on the east and west sides of the existing bridge during peak traffic volumes. Since the proposed design will be based on a small increase in traffic above existing volumes, an immediate improvement in traffic flow through the intersections should be experienced.

Q. How will traffic be directed in areas around the bridge on the east side?
A. There are a number of alternative alignments being considered and evaluated for the proposed bridge and approaches on the east side.

For the most part, a new approach using Charles Street in conjunction with Wisconsin Street, has been identified for the preferred alternatives. This alignment will move traffic using George Street to a more direct connection with the bridge, thereby reducing the congestion currently being experienced in the downtown business district of east De Pere.

Q. Will the new bridge address all of the current traffic problems?
A. No. The new bridge itself will not directly address current traffic problems, but the proposed intersection and approach roadway work will.

The current traffic problems exist due to insufficient numbers of turn and approach lanes and not due to the bridge itself.

The proposed work at the adjacent intersections and approach roadways will add the lanes needed to handle existing and future traffic volumes. The new bridge will work in conjunction with the improved intersections and approaches to handle the traffic at a better level of service.

Q. Can a bypass be built to reduce traffic in downtown De Pere?
A. Yes, a bypass of downtown De Pere can be built, but WisDOT does not have any plans to do so. However, a southern bypass of De Pere is currently being proposed by Brown County. Whether this proposed bypass will, in effect, reduce traffic will be dependent on the origin and destination of the traffic using either route.

Q. Is it possible to reroute Highways 57 and 32?
A. The state has no plans at this time to reroute Highways 57 and 32.

Q. Will Highways 57 and 32 be rerouted in the future?
A. The 1996 Brown County Comprehensive Land Use Plan does not include the rerouting of Highways 57 and 32 between now and 2020. WisDOT does not have any plans to reroute Highways 57 and 32 that vary from the Brown County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Note: While the Brown County Planning Commission will no doubt be updating the Land Use Plan at some time in the future, it is not currently underway.

Q. If Highways 57 and 32 were to be rerouted, would it reduce traffic in downtown De Pere?
A. Traffic will find the quickest and most convenient way to get to its destination. The amount of traffic diverted by rerouting

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Highways 57 and 32 would depend on the origin and destination of the traffic.

Q. If a new bridge is built south of De Pere, won't that reduce downtown De Pere traffic, eliminating the need for a new bridge?
A. The need for a new bridge in De Pere is being driven by the condition of the existing bridge and not by the amount of traffic.

The existing bridge was originally constructed in 1932. A 1998 report, prepared by the engineering firm Earth Tech for WisDOT concerning the condition of the existing bridge stated, "the structure has exceeded its service life and is in need of substantial expenditures of public funds to provide a safe and functional transportation facility."

The 1998 bridge condition report indicated the following:

- The structural condition is deteriorating at an increased rate.
- Even if a major rehabilitation of the structure was done, the structure would need to be replaced prior to 2008-2010
- Replacement of the structure is considered more cost effective than continued repairs or rehabilitation.

In summary, the independent engineering study on the condition of the bridge concluded "structure replacement is the preferred recommendation to provide a maintenance free facility with an extended service life to meet future traffic needs for the City of De Pere and Brown County."

Parking

Q. Will parking be eliminated on Broadway?
A. This has not yet been decided. Several options for Broadway parking are being evaluated. Issues related to parking on Broadway include:
- an increased cost share for the project to the City and potentially to the businesses owners,
- safety impacts on pedestrian movements,
- downtown aesthetics,
- and potentially increased traffic congestion.

Q. How much parking will be allowed on Broadway?
A. The two options under consideration include parking on one side of the street only or controlled parking on both sides of the street during non-peak traffic hours. Both options have positives and negatives associated with them. However, increased parking enforcement by the City will no doubt be required.

Q. Where will additional parking be added?
A. If the new bridge is built in a new location, the existing bridge approach on George Street could be utilized for parking. If George Street becomes one way between Broadway and Wisconsin Streets, additional parking spots could be provided in this block.

Q. Don't we already have a shortage of parking spots in the Broadway area?
A. A recent study completed by the City of De Pere in 2000 indicated: "Downtown De Pere has ample parking spaces for existing employees and customers with 60 percent more than the average city of 19,000 population." In addition, "The peak parking demand occurs at noon on a weekday with 51 percent of the parking spaces occupied."

Q. Will eliminating some parking hurt the business district?
A. On-street parking on Broadway (approx. 40 stalls) may be removed or restricted, but additional parking spaces (approx. 55 stalls) are being proposed nearby to serve the businesses. Since these new stalls are in close proximity to the businesses, the impacts should be minimal. With the decreased traffic congestion in the downtown area due to the proposed improvements, customers should find it easier to get to their destination.

Bridge design & location

Q. Why does this bridge need so many lanes?
A. Four lanes are needed to accommodate the amount of existing and future traffic crossing the river in downtown De Pere. Also, bike lanes and sidewalks will be provided on both sides of the bridge to accommodate pedestrians.

Q. Why can't there be a smaller bridge that doesn't destroy so much of the downtown?
A. "Federal funding insists on a reasonable level of service for the investment," according to the Federal Highway Administration. In other words, in order to use federal funds the project should provide a positive return on the expenditure of federal dollars and actually improve the situation - with less traffic congestion, backups and delays. The Federal Highway Administration also "expects adequate capacity for the design year (end of construction + 20 years) to be built with the project."

Q. Has there been consideration of two, one-way bridges instead of just one bridge?
A. Yes. This option appears less desirable because of the resulting relocation of businesses at the intersection of Broadway and George Streets. In addition, the overall construction and maintenance costs of two structures is greater than for one structure. From a municipal planning basis, most communities are now staying away from one-way streets. Local businesses find one-way streets more objectionable from a customer access basis.

Q. Will the new bridge be pedestrian friendly?
A. Yes. Sidewalks and bike lanes are proposed in both directions. In addition, consideration is being given to a number of wider lookout areas for pedestrian use on the bridge.

Q. Why can't the new bridge be built next to the old bridge?
A. While it may be physically possible to construct the new bridge next to the old bridge, this alternative is less desirable for a number of reasons including:

- Businesses at the intersection of Broadway and George Streets would have to be relocated.
- Community opposition to closing the bridge for the long construction time period.
- Impacts on the downtown at the George Street and Broadway intersection.

Q. **What will happen to the existing bridge once the new bridge is built?**
A. If a new bridge is built in a new location, the existing bridge would be removed. If the new bridge is built at the existing location, the existing bridge would be removed and a new one built in its place.

Q. When will a southern bridge be constructed?
A. The southern crossing of the Fox River is planned for construction prior to 2020. Brown County is responsible for this project and its construction. It will determine when or if this bridge is constructed.

As stated earlier in this newsletter, the need for a new bridge in De Pere is being driven by the condition of the existing bridge and not by the amount of traffic. Therefore, a new bridge is needed even if a southern bridge is built.

Q. Why not build a tunnel instead of a bridge?
A. Several residents have suggested that WisDOT consider building a tunnel, in lieu of a bridge, to take the place of the aging Claude Allouez Bridge. While on the surface this appears to be a potential solution, it involves many of the same issues as the bridge. The issues raised concerning the bridge have more to do with downtown traffic impacts and intersection widths than the bridge structure itself. A tunnel does not resolve these issues. A second concern has to do with the physical entry points of a tunnel. On both the east and west end, tunnel entrances would be very difficult to locate due to existing buildings. In addition, the tunnel would need to pass under the channel on the east side, thereby, moving the entrance much further east of the current proposed Broadway intersection. Finally, the costs associated with building and maintaining a tunnel would be many times greater than a bridge.

Government involvement

Q. Has the De Pere City Council approved a bridge alternative?
A. In the Fall of 1998, the City Council indicated a preference for the two, two-lane bridge alternative. In October 2000, the City Council, after reviewing refinements to the original one bridge alternative, encouraged continued evaluation of the alternatives, especially the utilization of Wisconsin Street as an approach corridor. The Council further indicated it might reevaluate its previous position regarding support for the two-bridge alternative.

Q. Why can't the city, the county and the DOT get together and build a bridge south of De Pere?
A. While a southern crossing of the Fox River may be desirable, it does not address our immediate problem concerning the condition of the existing bridge. In addition, construction of the southern bridge does not eliminate the need for the Claude Allouez Bridge.

Q. Have the city and the county gotten together to develop a long-range master plan for the future look of De Pere?
A. In 1996, a comprehensive land use and transportation plan was jointly prepared and developed by the Brown County Planning Commission, with input from local communities. The plan reviewed the overall needs of Brown County. The City of De Pere also has its own Comprehensive Plan, which is available for review on its homepage at www.ci.de-pere.wi.us.

Roundabouts

Q. What is the purpose of using roundabouts?
A. Roundabouts are a successful way to reduce vehicle speeds and increase intersection capacity while reducing the total area of the intersection.

A roundabout constructed at the east end of the bridge, at the intersection with Broadway, would reduce the number of lanes required on each leg of the intersection by three.

A roundabout constructed at the intersection of Third and Reid Streets would reduce the number of conflict points and simplify operations for vehicles at this intersection. The roadway alignment at the intersection of Third and Main would help ensure traffic speeds are kept low as vehicles leave the bridge and enter the west side business district on Main Avenue. It is important to note that the proposed intersection looks like a roundabout but would not be a "true roundabout" since vehicles would not make a full circle.

The roundabouts' central island area would also provide the City of De Pere an opportunity to enhance the aesthetics of the downtown area.

Q. Are roundabouts truly safer than traffic signal intersections?
A. Studies done in Europe, Australia and the U.S. have shown that roundabouts reduced crashes by 60 to 70 percent, compared to signalized intersections and stop sign controlled intersections. The Federal Highway Administration found roundabouts constructed in the United States have reduced crashes by 60 to 70 percent. The safety improvements are the result of speed reduction through the intersection and the simplification of the conflict points for drivers and pedestrians.

Q. What are the benefits of roundabouts compared to traffic signal intersections?
A. Roundabouts have many benefits including simplifying the driver's task, eliminating the need for what is called excessive storage capacity, reducing traffic speed and improving aesthetics. Here's how it works:

Drivers entering signalized intersections must be aware of traffic

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from several different directions. Drivers entering roundabouts need only to be aware of traffic from the left. Plus, the substantial reduction in delays, and the lack of waiting at a red light, eliminates the need to provide excessive storage capacity.

To improve aesthetics, the central island area provides an opportunity to create an attractive entrance to downtown De Pere by using landscaping and/or sculptures.

Q. Do roundabouts help pedestrian traffic?
A. "Before" and "after" studies conducted in Europe and Australia, have shown reductions in the number of pedestrian accidents from 68 to 89 percent at locations where a roundabout replaced traffic signals.

Pedestrians benefit since they only need to cross one direction of traffic at a time due to the presence of an "island refuge area." This allows pedestrians to wait safely before proceeding to cross the other lanes to the opposite side of the street.

Thus, instead of having to pay attention to traffic from both directions, the pedestrian only needs to watch for traffic from one direction.

Resurfacing the current bridge

Q. How old is the current bridge?
A. The original bridge was built in 1932.

Q. Can the current bridge be rebuilt?
A. The current bridge can be rebuilt. However, this would require the existing bridge to be out of service for 12–18 months during construction in order to reconstruct piers, place a new bridge deck, and remove the lift bridge. Also, rebuilding the existing bridge would not address the current or anticipated future traffic congestion in downtown De Pere.

Q. Why will resurfacing the current bridge only extend its life another eight years?
A. Resurfacing the existing bridge does not address the condition of the bridge's substructure (i.e. piers, girders, etc.).

Q. Wasn't the current bridge resurfaced in the early 1970s?
A. The lift span received a new deck in 1965 and it was again repaired in 1986. The rest of the structure received an asphalt overlay in 1974 and a new concrete deck in 1977. Since 1977, the concrete deck has been repaired in 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, etc. in order to keep the bridge open to traffic.

If you have questions about the Claude Allouez Bridge project, please contact:

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Claude Allouez Bridge

Frequently asked questions concerning the Claude Allouez Bridge replacement project in De Pere

WisDOT Green Bay Transportation District

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